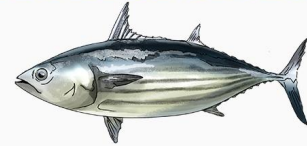




MEL NEWS

Skipjack
This month's
MEL certified
marine products



July 31st 2021

Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL) Council

MEL NEWS VOL. 40 (ENGLISH EDITION)

Dear MEL Partners:

The Olympic Games has just opened with the declaration of a state of emergency in Tokyo, and requests for self-restraint in unnecessary and non-urgent outings and transfers. Everything turned out to be an unprecedented event, but I would like to pray that it will contribute to the peace of the world while securing the excitement and the safety and security of the people. In the season of personnel affairs related to government offices, the Fisheries Agency also had several changes below the Director-General. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for their hard work, and at the same time, I hope that the seeds that have been sown for a new era with them will be nurtured and reaped.

Here are the topics that we would like to share with you as follows:

1. Status of MEL Certification

This month's certification was two aquaculture and one CoC. As a special note, York-Benimaru became the third case in the retail sector to receive CoC certification following Ito-Yokado and York. The three are the group companies of Seven & i Holdings. The total number of stores is 467, which are spread in 20 prefectures covering 69% of the population. We are focusing on the eastern Japan, but we hope that the certification will spread nationwide soon, that the products with the MEL logo will be displayed in stores that receive CoC certification, and that consumers will be able to use them.

2. MEL Japan Advisory Board Meeting

The Advisory Board for the first half of this year was held on July 5. It was the first time since February 6 last year due to the coronavirus. Professor Hiroyuki Matsuda chaired the meeting and we had extensive discussions on the issues facing MEL scheme; for instance, 1) response to slow penetration of MEL into consumers, 2) handling the items pointed out in MOCA and 3) strategy to leverage its distinctive diversity. We received valuable opinions on these issues.

The chair, Matsuda-san made a closing comment at the MEL Workshop held in December 2019, which coincidentally was the same time of MEL gained GSSI's recognition, that MEL is the learning place where various people participate in and keep evolving themselves while learning from day to day. We would like to take over his thought certainly.

Mr. Hiroshi Terashima, who attended the session, wrote about the current situation of MEL on his blog "Ocean Policy Now." Terashima-san is a legend of maritime issues, and I am delighted that his message will help the marine communities and societies in Japan better understand what MEL is aiming for.



Prof. Makino is speaking at Advisory Board

3. Voice from Certified Entities

In last month's MEL News, we reported that 22 boats belonging to the Japan Tuna Fisheries Cooperative Association were certified for distant water skipjack and tuna pole-and-line fishery. As a result, some entities have completed their own full supply chain of certified products from fishery, processing to distribution. Mr. Akihito Takahashi, president of Yaizu's Takahashi Shoten Co., Ltd., one of these entities, explained the current situation.

"Utilize MEL Certification for Consumers"

We, Takahashi Shoten, are based in Yaizu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, which is famous for its catch of skipjack and tuna. We are a fish processing company that processes skipjack and albacore tuna caught by pole-and-line fishing. There is the subsidiary called Shoeimaru Co., Ltd., which owns and operates three large tuna fishing boats, Shoei-maru, registered in Yaizu.

We have sympathized with the activities and philosophy of Marine Eco-Label Japan (MEL). We had obtained the fishery certification Ver. 1.0 when the former MEL was established and, in June 2020 obtained CoC certification Ver. 2.0 that recognized by GSSI. With the effectuation of MEL fishery certification Ver. 2.0 for distant water skipjack and tuna fishing boats including Shoei-maru, our company, the integrated business operator with fishery, processing and sales, has finally been able to connect the dots in MEL. Now we are ready to sell the products with



Takahashi's Office, Plant and Cold Storage

MEL Ver. 2.0 certification to retailers and consumers. We expect more retailers to obtain MEL certification in the future, triggered by our certifications of fishery and CoC getting combined under the new scheme of version 2.0.

As stated in the SDGs concept, we believe that the existence of MEL is essential for consumers to be able to choose environmentally friendly seafood products and to choose and consume what they need, as an option for selection of certified products. In addition, we will continue to strive to develop our businesses while balancing resource protection and environmental considerations with our business aspects.

Written by Akihito Takahashi

4. Column

Mr. Satoshi Matsumoto of the JCCU, who promotes environmental conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources, talks about expectations for the marine eco-label from the perspective of the activities of JCCU.

"Efforts to Marine Eco-Label Certify COOP Products"

The Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) is a national federation of co-operatives that consists of local co-operatives and prefectural/business type co-operatives. Established in March 1951, it currently has 314 co-ops and federations. The total business volume of the member co-ops is about 3.7 trillion yen, and the total number of members is about 30 million as the end of 2020 fiscal year. Each co-op in Japan conducts its own business and activities as a separate entity. The JCCU and its member co-ops do not have a headquarter-to-branch relationship. JCCU's merchandising business unit has two main functions: develop COOP products and distribute COOP products nationwide. We mainly develop private label products with the COOP mark.

In Japan's co-operatives, there is a history where many union members have been engaged in a variety of activities to improve their lives and society. Around 1970, when pollution problems such as air, river and ocean pollution became more serious, we started to sell and promote environmentally-friendly detergents and conduct a direct delivery from the farms. In the 1990s, we also launched the products with an environmentally-friendly mark based on JCCU's own standards. Since the establishment of third-party certification system for eco-label progressed

in society, we decided to eliminate our mark and adopted the external third-party certification standard for that for environmentally conscious products."

In May this year, the JCCU formulated (1) JCCU's 2030 Environmental and Sustainability Policy, promoted by nationwide co-op groups, to realize a sustainable society by 2030. In line with this policy, we established the slogan of (2) 2030 Target for COOP Products. In addition, in order to further promote responsible procurement that respects human rights and takes account of the environment throughout the supply chain, we formulated and published (3) Basic Policy for Responsible Procurement of COOP Products*. (Note: (2) (3) refers to COOP products sold by JCCU)*

**See News Release https://jccu.coop/info/newsrelease/2021/20210519_02.html*

As a part of our efforts to promote an ecolabel in the marine product category, we launched products with MSC certification in 2007, MEL certification in 2012 and ASC certification in 2016. Since more than half of our products are sourced from overseas raw materials, we focus on MSC and ASC certifications, which are an international certification, while adopting GSSI-recognized certification schemes depending on business needs. Besides, we plan to launch products with the BAP logo in the second half of fiscal 2021.

The ratio of products with the marine eco-label to the total in the seafood category managed by JCCU was 12.2% in 2020 (MSC 10.6%, ASC 0.8%, MEL 0.8%), and we aim to increase this up to 20% or more by 2025. In addition, the aforementioned "2030 Target for COOP products" states that, as for the marine products or fresh seafood, we will increase the ratio with GSSI-recognized scheme, centering MSC and ASC products, up to 50% or more. One of the reasons why JCCU is actively focusing on certified eco-labels is that it is currently most effective to use third-party certification system in order to expand the fish caught or produced with consideration for the environment and human rights and the processed seafood made from such raw materials. Also, in communication with COOP members who use our products, the ecolabel is useful for promoting the products made from sustainable raw materials on our home delivery catalog and in stores' seafood shelves.

Since 2017, the JCCU has been creating and updating a booklet called "COOP Ethical" every year to increase awareness and understanding among COOP members about the ecolabel, and has also created videos and other educational materials to encourage the members and employees to use them in learning activities. According to an annual survey conducted by the JCCU, in the case of MSC certification, the total number of people who have purchased or seen but not purchased labeled products has increased from 15.9% in 2016 to 20.7% in 2017, 29.7% in 2018, 27% in 2019, and 32.1% in 2020. We believe this reflects our efforts on merchandising of product allocation and communication with the members. We believe, as awareness of

labels increases, consumers tend to get more interested in using labeled products.

In 2021, in order to further develop our SDGs and ethical consumption initiatives, we began a new program called "COOP Sustainable," for the sustainable products of vegetable, fruit, meat and seafood and the product made from such raw material serializing product lineups and putting a common logomark. There are several marine eco-labels adopted by the JCCU. We would like to incorporate these products with such logos and labels into our series, and put the message "Protect the resources of the sea" under the common logo so that our members can use them more easily.

Since Marine Eco-label Japan (MEL) has been developed for limited species (mainly skipjack tuna) in COOP product lineups, it has to be gained members' recognition for MEL from now. As a result of the expiration of old MEL standard, there are no COOP products with the MEL logo at present, but certifications under the new standards are getting increasing, so from the second half of 2021 through 2022, we plan to add the products with MEL logo for wakame seaweed, farmed salmon, skipjack and dried anchovy (shirasu).

COOP members tend to have a strong desire to use domestic marine products, thus we hope that MEL will be established as a standard evaluated and recognized in Japan and overseas, and that, used the MEL certification standard as an index, efforts to improve Japan's resource management and ecosystem conservation in Japan's fisheries and aquaculture sectors will get progressed so that more consumers can use sustainable domestic marine products.

Written
Mr.
Satoshi



by

Matsumoto

5. Practice of Certified Product and Promotion

The first certification of new MEL went into effect on February 28, 2019. One of the core members, the Hokkaido Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Association (Hokkaido Gyoren), has been actively promoting the MEL certified fish with a largest volume, Chum Salmon, through the supply chain of fishery, processing and distribution. This month, Mr. Hiroki

Kurachi, in charge of marketing, share his thoughts with us.

"MEL Certification Updates and Strategy in Hokkaido"

The Hokkaido Gyoren is a group of producers established by fisheries cooperatives in Hokkaido, and conducts daily activities to stabilize the distribution and prices of marine products in Hokkaido. Originally, we started efforts to export a large catch of Chum Salmon with the eco-label. With the spread of SDGs in recent years, it has been recognized in Japan, and we have received various inquiries from various quarters.

As for MEL certification, from the stage of fishery certification ver.1, we cooperated with MEL Council and obtained fishery certification ver.2 for the Chum Salmon set net fishery in February 2019. In 2020, all of our affiliated production companies obtained CoC certification, which enables to establish our own production system. Currently, we produce the products with MEL logomark such as ikura (salmon roe pickled in soy sauce), chum salmon fillet cut and dress cut. We plan to expand these product lineups to include salmon flakes and salmon breaded fillets in the near future.

In addition to these products, we are preparing to put the MEL logomark on "Sen Akisake Fillets (Fresh Chum Salmon Fillet)" this fall. Sen Akisake Fillet is sold at many retailers nationwide every year as "taste of autumn", and is one of the most exposed Chum Salmon products. By attaching the MEL logo on this item and distributing it, we hope to be able to help increase MEL awareness. Also, since the eco-label certification became one of the procurement standards of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic 2020, our Chum Salmon was listed as the item of such certified ingredient. On the other hand, at the fishing sites in Hokkaido, in line with the SDGs, fisheries cooperatives and producers are increasingly interested in the marine eco-label, and following the certified Chum Salmon and Surf Clam, another two fisheries are currently preparing for obtaining MEL certification.

I would like to continue to cooperate with the MEL Council and related organizations in order to expand fishery certification from Hokkaido and increase awareness and consumption of MEL products.

Written by Hiroki Kurachi



Chum Salmon Product (left: Ikura Salmon Roe, right: Salmon Fillet Cut)

MEL Info - Open New Account on Instagram!

In order to make MEL's activities known to more people, we created a new Instagram account. As you now, Instagram is the social network that allows users to send information visually such as photos and videos. Recently, the number of accounts operated by companies and organizations has been increasing. Through catchy programs like quiz and giveaway campaigns, we aim to deepen consumers' understanding of SDGs and marine eco-label as a whole, and make MEL more accessible to them. In addition, by introducing companies that have acquired MEL certification and posting photos of certified products, we will increase the awareness of those who always cooperate with MEL activities.



URL: <https://www.instagram.com/meljapan/> (or search for @ meljapan on Instagram)

We would appreciate it if you could support us with "Good!" and "Follow."

If you have any comments or suggestions, feel free to let us know!

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